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THE COMPARATIVE METHOD IN SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF VOLODYMYR PERETS

The works by Volodymyr Perets (1870–1935) were of great importance for the development of comparative literature. The scientist is primarily known as a brilliant representative of the philological school of literary criticism [1; 3], as the founder of the philological seminar at the St. Volodymyr University, as the founder of Slavic formalism [10], as the author of books on the history of the methodology, in which he explicitly described the ways of literary analysis. However, he highly praised comparative literature, has applied its methodology in the literature on ties of old Ukrainian poetry with Russian and Polish, highly praised it in the manual “From the lectures on the methodology of the Russian literature. History of studies. Methods. Sources” (K, 1914). Studies in Byzantine, old Bulgarian, old Russian literature led him to the conclusion that, in addition to a large number of receptions of the ancient Bulgarian literature, the latter already had in ancient times the works which reflected the spiritual and aesthetic needs of South Rus and Moscow state. He referred to the Literature of XIII–XIV centuries as the peculiar one – in the language, themes, and also strange for Muscovite Rus. V. Peretz stressed the importance of local national foundations in the development of every literature:

“Literature is national in content and language” [6, 3], the “literature of our time is the event of national life ... One might think that in the future there will be the international literature when narrow borders of nationalities will be erased. But the question of the language is still open ...” [4, 184]. It’s important for a researcher, to what extent each phenomenon is the result of “a certain point of literary evolution or whether it’s a product of a particular moment or whether it has any traditional elements, whether everything belongs to the author, whether it has anything created by another person, or what actually the author wanted to tell in his work as a representative of the epoch, and what he repeated mechanically, reproducing the literary skills of his generation” [4, 340]. The researcher put before the students requirements to study the work of a writer as an artistic phenomenon that has historical basis, national soil and its laws, as well as: attention to shape, moving the emphasis from “what” to “how” should be considered in the context of a more general process of reorientation in literary studies into the modernist day as a reaction to positivism and sociologism of the nineteenth century. V. Perets, as every researcher who left a great scientific heritage has research works, which are better known and relevant but there are also the ones to which people refer less, and there are little known ones, too. Among his works there is also an article on the observation of the comparative method in literary criticism [5]. Unfortunately, it had appeared already in 1934, shortly before the arrest of the scientist and the comparative method in literary criticism since the 1930-s is called idealistic, outdated, and ultimately reactionary [2, 335], because it did not meet the then ideological doctrine.

That is why the works by V. Perets were not implicated in the science of that period of time, although the author was trying hard to prove the necessity of comparative studies, tried to justify them, and to supplement them with the teaching about classes, sociological conclusions, but to his honor he never used the clichés like “the only correct Marxist-Leninist doctrine”, and so on. Now, this article is important as an indication of how in the 1930-ies beliefs even of the old school of scientists were distorted that tried at least at such a price to save the most valuable achievements of pre-revolutionary science.

V. Perets wrote about himself that he had never been a theorist of the comparative method but he used it: more extensively in the works in folklore and with more limits in the works in the literature of 17–18 centuries, so the weak sides couldn't hide from him, which “clearly appeared in the works of his followers who were not always cautious” [5, 337]. In particular, he considered excessive the accumulation of parallels that are “an entirely superfluous ballast” [8, 27] in the case when the number of borrowings is clear and there's no need in dubious conjectures.

In “Lectures on the methodology of the history of the Russian literature” (1914) he, in fact, summed up the theory of comparative method, noting that it stands out with its most objectivity and aims to clarify the origin of the monuments of literature and the process of their formation by comparison totally and in parts, allowing the possibility of wider international influences. It is important to emphasize that the writer even wanted to be purely national, touching other people's literature and culture, inadvertently crosses the border of the national and derives from foreign sources, learning for his literature new forms and subjects, sometimes strange for it to this point.

Based on authoritative predecessors (Dunlop, Libreht, Chalets, Kerting, the brothers Grimm, Benfey, F. Buslaev, O. Veselovskiy, etc.). V. Perets says: one must first remember that the literatures of surrounding people always influence each other, and therefore it's needed to simultaneously learn them all. Comparative study reveals not only the sources of a particular literary work, but also shows the ways in which the author, who lived later learned of the re-processed subject by him. Sometimes the comparative and historical method, – said V. Perets next – “goes to ethnographic ground, so trying to solve the double task: not only to explain the appearance of a piece of borrowed plot, but also why this story is borrowed, not the other one” [4, 178]. After studying social and literary aspects the plot can be found, which gave impact to the creative activity of the author, and it shows what new, original things the author added to this wandering plot. Therefore, the comparative and historical method “requires enormous erudition and preparation of critically checked material, and basically – critical care and tact” [4, 180].

However, the scientist pointed out that comparative research has its “pitfalls” and, quoting the words of I. Sreznevsky about independent origin of literary forms, emphasized: “One should always remember that to see “borrowings” in everything and everywhere for the scientist who uses the comparative method is a sign of “bad taste”, bad school or absence of any school” [4, 181]. The theoretical expression of the comparative method by V. Perets added few things to remarks about him of M. Tikhonravov, O. Pypin, O. Galakhov, O. Arkhangel'skiy et al.: for all the scientists of that time the main task of literary science is primarily to clarify the genesis of literary monuments. V. Perets always opposed such an

understanding of the comparative method, which “is reduced to a primitive selection of parallels ... of such a general character that they do not explain anything” [7, 381].

In the chapter devoted to philological methods, V. Perets describes its main techniques which are applied after the bibliographic training. This is the critique of texts of monuments of literature, history of their text and comparative and historical study of their form and content. So, the scientist united “in one methodological set preliminary studies of foreign history of the work with an analysis of its internal qualities, which was based on the comparative methods” [10, 17]. In the works by Perets in 1934 the basic methodological premise is the relationship of literature with life, its dynamic nature, according to which it is worth exploring it, and conventionality of any periodization, which is efficient only from the pedagogical point of view. It divides pretty straightforward people and literature into the forefront, so-called trendsetters, and into those that borrow cultural heritage from them. Borrowing is extremely convenient and familiar way to “line up” with the legislator. Therefore, the main category of Comparative Literature studies for V. Perets is borrowing as an inevitable phenomenon of life.

It's treated by the scientist as mastering of literary experience of representatives of historical earlier cultural layers of the top class. One can not deny the facts of borrowings in the literature – he said – as well as the laws of such borrowing. The question is, as it happens, for whatever reason they are, what are the consequences, for whom they are. The borrowing in the literature for V. Perets – is not only the result of intercourse between nations but above all – between classes, which are at a similar stage of social and cultural development.

How his observations prove, in the literary sphere borrowings are not “foreign body”: they often grow strongly into the new environment and have their part in, decrease, extend, vary, fulfill different functions according to the needs of time and culture of a class that uses them. Borrowing – the scientist emphasized – in the process of literary development shares the fate of the original and is affected in the same way by social changes in the society where it exists. V. Perets defines literary borrowings as transformation of a literary monument into the new language environment, and also transformation of ideological and formal material of literary production of predecessors, sometimes contemporaries by the writer in his work. This transformation, he said, is intentional, conscious (plagiarism, imitation) or unintentional, based on memories of the read or heard (impact reminiscence). The researcher naturally raises the question: does such a transfer take place by chance or not? The answer of V. Perets is categorical: there are no coincidences. After all, a writer often quietly passes thousands of literary models, statements of many predecessors, but “is not infected with their ideas, do not remember them, do not assimilate their own verbal formulas so tightly that they become familiar to him – and only in some cases out of a mass of material created by his predecessors, he takes somewhat designing in his own way” [5, 330]. But the scientist comes to an unexpected conclusion, it is not based on the psychology of creativity but on the class theory: borrowing after the definition of V. Perets, is “reproduction by a writer in the art, intentionally or unintentionally, the literary heritage, which reflects its class interest and corresponds to its ideology of class based on certain socio-economic base” [5, 331]. The scientist says: all instances of borrowing: deliberate,

basic, easily detected, and unintended are much more difficult because the researcher can have various objections and concerns – they come out with the comparative method. It's is understood very broadly by V. Perets, emphasizing its importance in everyday life and science, noting that people are commonly served by comparing: through comparing they understand things and opinions, evaluate them and get into the essence of them.

V. Perets notes the historic merit of scholars who justified and demonstrated in his writings the principles of the comparative method. The names of Benfey, Libreht, Koehler, Paris, O. Pypin, O. Veselovskiy, I. Zhdanov, in his opinion, are the kind of milestones, indicators of a new era in the history of literature. These scientists have made many important things for their time at their stage, breaking the question of the genesis of the work that V. Peret calls dramatic for further work in literature. Although many works have caused complaining in their time (by V. Stasov, O. Veselovskiy, I. Zhdanov), but the comparative method is not to blame, but insufficient knowledge of the material, tendency for daring and hypothetical thinking, and sometimes – prejudgment of opinions.

The essence of the comparative method according to V. Peretz, is that literary phenomenon that is being studied as a whole and in parts, is compared with the previous time facts within the same or foreign literature, if there is evidence that the author was familiar with it. Thus, sequential comparison can show that 1) the product in question does not depend on specific patterns both ideological and formal (in the subject, composition, style, verbal form) and is independent and original. This does not mean that the author has created "freely" from the influence of the environment but that he did not use the previously written sample or pattern; 2) the composition under study, created by the author depends ideologically or formally on pre-existing ones; 3) the author of a work made a deliberate imitation, close to the sample, or unintentional, as a result of spontaneous reminiscence, moreover, has made something of his own, he processed the borrowed, showed the before used plot, idea, etc.

That is by comparing literary works of all time similarities and differences in content and form are set. In the first case, if there is a similarity of ideas, it's more difficult to determine the fact of the influence or borrowing: in particular conditions culture and social life of persons belonging to the same social group or class can be carriers of similar or even identical ideas. But it is much less likely that people who are separated by time, social status, education, belonging to a certain class affiliation express their ideas, feelings, moods in the same words in identical verbal formulas. If in a later work one finds verbal formulas known from earlier monuments, we can conclude that this is an imitation.

V. Perets tries to understand the question, if the comparative method is fit in terms of the present work or if it should be considered as outdated. The method, according to him, is primarily a tool and one can use it at work both skillfully and unskillfully. In some cases, the comparison carried out discreetly and competently, corresponding to the material gave some results, other researchers who were exposed to hard-working but futile collections gave some opposite results. Thus the comparative method and the "theory of borrowings" that came from it for a long time was used wherever possible and impossible, due to carelessness and uncritical attitude of its supporters completely lost its credibility among scholars who sought a universal key for all the questions of literature studies. Blind

doctrinaire never led to successful results, especially when it interferes with the real work and replaces it with the selection of quotes, mechanically learned and not adapted for the efficient work with the material.

Behind the inefficient use of the comparative method, according to the observations of V. Perets, somewhat different is hidden: 1) to a large extent confidence that accumulation of parallels and details has some self-sufficient value, 2) the desire to bring the literary process to the mechanical accumulation of facts, details, episodes, stylistic formulas, etc., depriving it of the inside base. This foundation was considered by V. Peretz as the course of life, relationship with its needs. First of all, one should not forget the recipient for whom literature is created, its functional role and purpose.

A common mistake in cases of unsuccessful use of the comparative method, as V. Perets believes, is in ignoring the historical context in which the work was written, in particular, researchers do not include a biography of a writer, they often don't even ask if he could borrow this or that element of his work, whether he knew the language of the source, which is attributed to him and finally, if he held it in his hands. No attention is paid to conditions of life of the society and the nature of borrowing, which is attributed to the author, and which is, in fact, the verbal expression of "ideas of the century". In addition, the experience of observing the facts convinces V. Perets, that nothing quite alien to the psychics of a writer is borrowed: the basis of "borrowing" is in the relationship of interests, moreover, not only personal, but – what the scientist emphasizes now – the social, and class ones.

As V. Perets notes, no imitation or borrowing literally repeats the original. This is prevented by the very fact that an imitator lives later than the original creator. Thus, he concludes, "Mechanical borrowing does not happen, even if ready some episodes, some narrative units are transformed" [5, 334] – the reader sees them in another frame taken with a new understanding of their meaning. For a scientist the idea of change is of great importance, transformation of borrowing, its correlation, coordination with the facts of life create new social environment, as a result of which any literal identical borrowing never happens. V. Perets raises the question keenly clear: whether literary critics can abandon the use of the comparative method, and he replies that they can not, but should be subordinate to certain installations of contemporary literature studies. Comparative method will reveal "what and how (author's emphasis. – G. A.) in the process of creative work this or that writer ... for his artistic design uses, taking them from the treasury of the collective literary experience of his predecessors" [5, 335].

And suddenly, V. Perets decreases the meaning of the comparison, reducing it only to the tool "The comparative method as a tool that helps to clarify the process of the writer's work will inevitably be applied in the work on the literary heritage of the past, but it will lead to the pointless collecting of parallels that demonstrates a researcher's erudition, but his works do not bring anything to the reader" [5, 338]. And the conclusion seems quite artificial that the comparative method in the work of a literary critic is needed only as a method of preparation processing of literary material for further analysis of the sociological view. The monument of literature was not discovered from the viewpoint of its origin, and is not yet specified as original, translated or imitative – it can not be used as a material for the history

of literature. Lack of evidence of what the new environment has brought into a borrowed monument by means of translation or imitation would not be able to determine the degree of originality and the process of transformation of the borrowed environment. Abandoning the use of the comparative method, the scientist stresses – we will not be able to penetrate the motives of borrowing. Mistaken are those who imagine that comparison has some self-sufficient value, and those who think this method is unnecessary at this stage of social and academic life, – says V. Perets.

According to scientists, the comparative method – is not an idealistic or materialistic system of philosophical concepts, but of identification of cultural and literary ties in verbal creativity of all the nations that are connected with each other in the historic and prehistoric life.

This understanding now looks like extremely narrow and simplistic, it was, of course, primarily a tribute to the time than the inner conviction of the author. Thus this particular year of the publication of V. Perets people started talking about the relentless struggle with the representatives of the anti-Marxist tendencies. Negative characteristics were given to literary critics, who “came out of Kyiv University – N. K. Gudziy and A. A. Nazarevskyi follow the typical for Kyiv “school” (of professors V. N. Perets and A. M. Loboda) statistically comparable methodological positions” [9, 104] (original initials are given exactly like in the Russian version. – G. A.). Ideological factors that prevailed in all areas of scientific activity caused irreparable damage to literary studies in general and to comparative studies in particular, misrepresented its principles and declared it as a pseudoscience for several decades that largely destroyed the continuity of the national literary-historical thinking and narrowed the methods of knowledge of literary phenomena.

Today, the branch has revived and actively develops, so for many researchers especially important are scientific researches of many supporters of the comparative method in the Ukrainian literary studies, the beginning of which was the philological seminar of Professor V. M. Perets. With him came a constellation of scholars: V. Adrionova-Perets, O. Bagriy, L. Beletskyi, O. Burgardt, M. Hudziy, O. Doroshkevych, M. Dray-Khmara, M. Kalynovych, M. Markowskyi, S. Maslov, O. Nazarevskyi, P. Popov, P. Filipovych et al., who participated in the comparative study of the traditions of the Ukrainian literature.

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